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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

340th meeting

Tuesday, 8 April 2014, 3 p.m.

New York

Chair: Mr. Drobnjak ..... (Croatia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General debate (*continued*)

The Chair: I would urge those delegations that have not yet done so to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible, as we plan to conclude the general exchange of views today at 6 p.m.

Mr. Yennimatas (Greece): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. First of all, allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission for 2014, as well as the members of the Bureau on their election. The EU looks forward to working closely with you, Mr. Chair, to achieve a successful outcome of the current session. We look forward to continued discussion on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on practical confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the field of conventional weapons.

The EU continues to regard the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT and an important element in the further development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. In view of current proliferation risks, we are convinced that today the NPT is more important than ever. We must strengthen its authority and integrity. We reaffirm our full support for all three pillars of the Treaty. Upholding the NPT remains our priority. The EU emphasizes the importance of universalizing the NPT and calls on all States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States and, pending their accession to the Treaty, to adhere to its terms and pledge commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is of crucial importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and its entry into force and universalization remain top priorities for the European Union. We welcome the final declaration adopted on 27 September 2013 at the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT and underline the importance of the implementation of the concrete measures that were identified in it.

For the European Union, the immediate commencement and early conclusion of the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices on the basis of document CD/1299 remains another clear priority. It is urgent and important as an essential step to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in accordance with the goals of the NPT. We call on all States possessing nuclear weapons to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts, which is meeting right now in Geneva to advance discussions on that important issue.

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Last year, several initiatives were adopted through resolutions in the General Assembly concerning nuclear disarmament, including one to convene a follow-up to the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11) under resolution 68/32 and other concerning the Open-ended Working Group under resolution 68/46. Member States of the EU gave their respective positions on those resolutions through explanations of vote (see A/68/PV.60).

We warmly welcome the adoption of the landmark Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) by the General Assembly. The EU has always been a staunch supporter of the Treaty. The Treaty establishes robust and effective common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of international trade in conventional arms and provides a new multilateral framework for transparency and accountability in that trade. The Treaty will help prevent arms from reaching those who fuel instability and conflict, commit atrocities and violate human rights and international humanitarian law. When effectively and globally implemented, the ATT will contribute to more responsible and transparent international arms transfers as well as more effective export controls. We look forward to the Treaty's early entry into force.

By signing and ratifying the Treaty, States can sustain the international momentum generated by the ATT. Seventeen EU member States deposited their instruments of ratification last week, on the first anniversary of the adoption of the Treaty. The remaining EU member States will do so soon, as their national ratification procedures are well under way. Member States of the EU will thereby contribute significantly to reaching the threshold of the 50 ratifications needed for the Treaty's entry into force. The EU, for its part, intends to make its own contribution, including through the implementation of European Council decision 2013/768/CFSP, adopted on 16 December 2013, on EU activities in support of the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty by third countries in the framework of the European Security Strategy.

The EU welcomes the adoption, on 26 September 2013, of Security Council resolution 2117 (2013), the first-ever resolution adopted by the Security Council on the issue of small arms and light weapons. The EU remains convinced that efforts to better control small arms and light weapons have to be intensified, in particular in those areas where significant obstacles to full implementation persist. We believe that those areas include the issue of the diversion of small arms and light weapons, stockpile management, stockpile security and stockpile destruction, marking and tracing, the integration of ammunition and the gender perspective, as well as the need to better address the humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The EU remains strongly committed to the effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument. In that context, the EU looks forward to substantive discussions at the fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We intend to continue to make an active contribution to the process, including by submitting an EU working paper.

We also wish to remind Committee members of the EU working paper on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons presented in Working Group II of the United Nations Disarmament Commission during last year's session. We remain committed to the goals of confidence-building measures aimed at strengthening international peace and security, improving relations among States and contributing to the prevention of war. In our view, practical CBMs in the field of conventional weapons should, inter alia, include exchanges of information on national legislation, regulations and procedures on the transfer of arms, military equipment, dual-use goods and technology, including small arms and light weapons as a separate category in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, transparency in the field of military expenditure and CBMs at the regional and subregional levels.

In conclusion, we would like to wish you every success in the work of this session, Mr. Chair, and reiterate the full support of the European Union.

Mr. Al-Hajri (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation is honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Arab Group. We express our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the 2014 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and to members of the Bureau. We are confident that, with your experience and perspicacity, you will successfully lead our work, in the last year of the cycle, towards recommendations that take into consideration the concerns of all Member States.

The Arab Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.337).

While the Arab Group emphasizes that this multilateral United Nations forum provides the only sustainable way to deal with issues of disarmament and international security, the Arab Group expresses its concern that the Commission has not been active since 2000 and has not reached any agreements with regard to recommendations on disarmament. The Arab Group calls on all Member States to implement their collective and individual commitments and to cooperate actively in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Arab Group believes in the important role played by the Disarmament Commission as the only deliberative organ mandated to present recommendations related to issues of disarmament. The Arab Group expresses its concern that the Conference on Disarmament has also faced an impasse for the past two decades as a result of the lack of political will, including the lack of recommendations for, and the lack of an agreement on, a comprehensive agreement on nuclear weapons. The Group welcomes the efforts to break that deadlock and the success in that regard achieved by the representative of Iraq while leading the Conference on Disarmament in August 2013, as well as the adoption by the Conference of the proposal to establish an informal working group to produce a programme of work for the Conference.

In order that the Commission can fulfil its objectives, the Arab Group calls on Member States to demonstrate sincere political will to strengthening disarmament, including by making recommendations to achieve the objectives of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Arab Group is aware that, although nuclear disarmament was the first priority that was agreed upon at the tenth special session of the General Assembly of 1978, it has not been fully reflected in the work of the multinational Disarmament Commission. The Arab Group welcomes the support for the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11), which was held in New York on 26 September 2013, and for resolution 68/32, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament". In that respect, the Arab Group expresses its hope that Working Group I will present practical proposals and ideas that contribute to progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame and the achievement of a comprehensive agreement on nuclear weapons.

The Arab Group calls for the establishment of zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East as one of its priorities. In that connection, it underscores the fact that all parties should abide by the deadlines set out in the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to hold the 2012 conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East as soon as possible before the end of this year. The Arab Group emphasizes that the postponement of the 2012 Conference can be ascribed to Israel's refusal to abide by and comply with the international consensus and its insistence on possessing nuclear weapons. In that respect, we welcome the initiative proposed by the Arab Republic of Egypt on 28 September 2013, before the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, which included tangible steps to support regional and international efforts on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It also supports the letters that the States members of the League of Arab States and Iran addressed to the Secretary-General, as contained in document A/68/781, which emphasize their support for declaring the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

While the Arab Group follows closely the developments in that respect, it emphasizes that the non-implementation of the Middle East resolution of 1995 and the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons constitutes a violation of the Treaty regime and affects the Treaty's credibility and reflects negatively on the success of the forthcoming Review Conference in 2015.

The Arab Group presents those priorities with regard to the issues before this substantive session of the Commission and is quite aware of the difficult tasks that face us all. Yet that should not stop us from seeking to realize our desired objectives during this session and, indeed, makes us intensify all our efforts in order to reach constructive recommendations and results that could lead to progress on issues related to comprehensive disarmament so that we may achieve the goal of a world of peace and security.

Mr. Wensley (South Africa): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on assuming your position as Chair of the 2014 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We also wish to extend our congratulations to the members of the Bureau and the Working Group Chairs on their assumption of their duties. We assure you, Sir, of South Africa's full support.

South Africa wishes to align itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group, respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.337).

Multilateralism and multilateral diplomacy remain at the core of our efforts to find lasting solutions to the challenges that we face in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. That is why we believe it is important that the Disarmament Commission, as the sole deliberative body of the multilateral disarmament machinery, agree to a set of concrete recommendations on its two agenda items in this, the final substantive session of its current three-year cycle. Failure to do so would serve only to further undermine the multilateral disarmament machinery, thereby adversely affecting international peace and security.

With regard to the agenda item on achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, my delegation wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). As the NPT is the only legally binding international instrument that establishes a universal norm against the further proliferation of nuclear weapons and is a legally binding commitment to nuclear disarmament and a reaffirmation of the inalienable right of States to pursue nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, we remain committed to promoting full compliance with all its provisions and their universal application.

While we welcome the significant progress that has been made towards realizing the non-proliferation objectives of the Treaty, we continue to be concerned about the lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament in fulfilment of article VI of the Treaty, particularly following the unequivocal undertakings made towards nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States at successive Review Conferences. Non-compliance with article VI obligations and the lack of implementation of the concrete steps agreed to during Review Conferences undermines the NPT as the foundation of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime.

South Africa continues to believe that the potential catastrophic impact of nuclear weapons poses a serious threat to humankind. That is why we have emphasized the humanitarian impact and the inherent threats and risks posed by the possession, use and threat of use and proliferation of those weapons. In that context, South Africa was one of the 146 States that participated in the second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Mexico in February. The Conference provided a clear recognition that humanitarian considerations remain a fundamental and global concern that must be at the core of all deliberations on nuclear weapons.

South Africa also attaches particular importance to the first ever General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, held on 26 September 2013 (see A/68/PV.11). Again, that event was a strong expression of support for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a view to contributing in a practical manner to international peace and security.

We wish to reiterate the points made by those who spoke on behalf of NAM and the African Group that resolution 68/32, entitled "Follow-up to the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament", is an appropriate framework for pursuing the principled objective of nuclear disarmament. It is an anomaly that, while biological and chemical weapons have been subject to internationally legally binding instruments banning their production, use and stockpiling, and providing for their destruction given their indiscriminate nature and the unacceptable harm that these inhumane weapons cause, nuclear weapons have yet to be subject to a similar prohibition.

South Africa is pleased to be part of the African zone free of nuclear weapons and continues to support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world, including in the Middle East. We express our profound disappointment at the delay in the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and on the decision of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on convening a conference in 2012 to be attended by the States of the region. It remains our hope that the conference will be convened as a matter of urgency and without further delay.

South Africa looks forward to the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, which will commence immediately following this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. It is imperative that we continue to lay the

groundwork for the 2015 Review Conference to monitor th · compliance by all States parties of the commitments they undertook in the 2010 Review Conference action plan, including those by the nuclear-weapon States to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament.

With regard to the agenda item on practical confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the field of conventional weapons, there was an opportunity last year for the Group of Governmental Experts to review the operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its possible further expansion. South Africa was particularly honoured to Chair the Group. While there was a thorough consideration by the Group of the decline in participation in the instrument, South Africa was disappointed that no progress could be made on the possible expansion of the Register.

Some have argued that the United Nations Register is not so much a confidence-building measure as it is a voluntary transparency measure. However, that argument is flawed, as the terms "transparency" and "confidence-building measure" are synonymous when it comes to conventional arms control and international security. Nonetheless, Member States need to take cognizance of recent international developments and of the need for the instrument to remain relevant to conventional arms CBMs. In my delegation's view, the United Nations Register remains at the heart of our discussion of the agenda item.

There is no denying that the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) by the General Assembly a year ago has changed the landscape of the conventional arms control debate. The Treaty is fast nearing entry into force. The President of South Africa signed the ATT in September last year, and our domestic ratification process is in motion. The principle objective of the ATT is to establish the highest possible common international standards on the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms, which is the noble ideal that we should all aspire to. Under the ATT, States parties will be required to take a number of concrete steps at their respective national levels, thereby further ennancing practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

As for the issue of addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, South Africa continues to co-author, along with Colombia and Japan, the annual so-called omnibus small arms and light weapons draft resolution. We underscore the importance of the outcome document of the successfully concluded second Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and look forward to a successful fifth Biennial Meeting of States on the implementation of the Programme of Action in June this year.

We believe that, together with the practical measures set out in the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and through the regular submission of national reports, that also contributes to building confidence amongst States in the field of conventional arms.

In conclusion, the United Nations Disarmament Commission has faced the challenge of not being able to make any progress for several years now. We hope that all delegations are able to display the political will needed and that we may be able to make real progress during the current session.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): Allow me to add my voice to those of others in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission for 2014, as well as the members of the Bureau on their election. I am confident that with your wisdom and experience, Mr. Chair, you will be able to steer our deliberations to a successful conclusion, for which my delegation pledges its full cooperation. Allow me also to put on the record our sincere appreciation for Ambassador Christopher Grima, Permanent Representative of Malta, for his tireless efforts as Chair of the Commissi· n last year. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his remarks before the Commission yesterday.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Commission has a history of many concrete achievements, made possible through its consensus principles, guidelines and recommendations on a range of critical issues. However, it has been unable to deliver any tangible results for the past 14 years. That failure is not in keeping with the purpose of a subsidiary body of the General Assembly as important as the Commission. Nepal understands that only an effective Commission can make the significant contributions to the noble goal of the United Nations —maintaining international peace and security — envisaged for it. My delegation therefore continues to view the work of the

Commission, as the sole deliberative body in the system of multilateral disarmament machinery, as extremely important.

With its unwavering commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, Nepal believes strongly in the general, complete and speedy disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction. Nepal is an active participant in the international disarmament campaign aimed at prohibiting the proliferation around the world of all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological — and of conventional weapons as well. As a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention, and as a signatory of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Nepal is a firm advocate and promoter of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament.

We strongly oppose the weaponization of outer space and support the establishment of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones as critical steps forward that can give disarmament genuine meaning. We condemn the use of chemical weapons anywhere and welcome recent developments with regard to safeguarding the Middle East region.

Nepal notes with concern that the production, transfer and trade in conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, has increased many times in recent years. In that connection, while maintaining that every nation has a legitimate right to acquire small arms and light weapons for self-defence, Nepal strongly supports non-proliferation of such arms and weapons.

Nepal believes that all three pillars of nuclear disarmament — disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy — are equally important and mutually reinforcing, and that their sanctity should continue to be preserved as such. As set forth in the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the ultimate objective of the international community should be the achievement of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

It has fallen to the United Nations system to play the central role of a truly global, multilateral forum for maintaining international peace and security. To that end, it should make full use of all its related organs and entities — the General Assembly, the Security Council and other bodies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission — by which Member States can find a shared approach to the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the convening of the first-ever General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament last September, which witnessed high-level participation and strong expressions of support for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, and emphasized the importance of nuclear disarmament to international peace and security.

My delegation feels that confidence-building measures, particularly those undertaken under the aegis of the United Nations and other multilateral processes, can be instrumental in promoting transparency and understanding among stakeholders, reducing tensions and mitigating the threat of conventional weapons, particularly in conflict zones, and fostering a general environment conducive to international peace and security. Likewise, regional mechanisms can complement global-level efforts by creating a climate of effective collaboration among regional stakeholders. It is, however, important that confidence-building measures, irrespective of who undertakes and implements them, take into account countries' and regions' specific conditions.

As host to the United nations Asia-Pacific Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament, Nepal is convinced that such regional mechanisms could play a far greater complementary role than they do at present in promoting the global peace and disarmament agenda in their various regions. Nepal believes that such regional centres could also be instrumental in taking a consciousness of disarmament and non-proliferation to a wider audience of students and ordinary people, including through education such as is being championed by the Kathmandu Centre. I urge that the centres be well resourced and strengthened, encouraged to share experiences and best practices among themselves and used to the fullest.

Nepal attaches high importance to multilateral negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation with a view to promoting collective ownership, deliberations and responsibility for collective global action. The time has come to broaden and deepen collaboration among States in building the confidence, fostering the trust

and promoting the stability that will enable them to save precious resources for developing global commons.

In conclusion, Nepal believes that the possession of weapons of mass destruction does not guarantee State security. If global peace, security and prosperity are our shared objectives, we, the Member States, must commit to nurturing those shared objectives through consensus-building. We must demonstrate the collective political will and strength to take the responsibility of making the Commission a truly consensus-generating body and enabling it to submit concrete recommendations to the General Assembly on creating a safer planet for ourselves and generations to come.

Nepal believes that, as we approach the end of the three-year cycle of the Commission's session, the international community cannot afford to waste yet another opportunity for working with a sense of unity and responsibility. It is in that spirit that my delegation looks forward to working closely with all to make this session a success and pave the way for constructive engagement in the run-up to the upcoming NPT Review Conference in 2015.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): At the outset, Sir, I would like to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election. I would like to assure you that you will have our full cooperation. We would also like to take this opportunity to support the re-election of the members of the Working Groups.

Turkey, bilaterally and through multilateral platforms and initiatives, continues to work to advance the goals of complete nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We believe that the discussions at the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, held in September, were very valuable in that regard.

Turkey continues to see the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of disarmament and nonproliferation efforts. Equal and balanced treatment of its three mutually reinforcing pillars, as well as the Treaty's universalization, will solidify the integrity and credibility of the NPT regime. We should do our utmost to implement the 2010 NPT Review Conference action plan. In that context, I would like to underline our commitment to holding an international conference on establishing the Middle East zone free of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. The international community, in particular the conveners of that conference, should spare no effort to organize it as soon as possible. We should not turn a blind eye to its impact on the success of the NPT review cycle.

Furthermore, the Conference on Disarmament must be revitalized in order to enable it to reassume its unique role. Turkey believes the Conference possesses the mandate, membership and rules of procedure that it needs to effectively discharge its duties. We also look forward to the immediate start and early conclusion of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

We stress the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and encourage all States to ratify it as soon as possible.

Turkey will also continue to support mechanisms designed to prevent WMD material from falling into the wrong hands and to ensure nuclear safety and security, such as the Nuclear Security Summit process, which has just completed its third fruitful meeting. Needless to say, Turkey also fully supports Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), and the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004). To date we have submitted national reports and matrices on more than one occasion. We are now working on updating our national report and matrix, with a view to submitting it to the Committee as soon as possible.

Every State has the legitimate right to manufacture, import, export, transfer and retain conventional arms for its national defence and security, but we need to pay more attention to the adverse effects of such weapons. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Marking and Tracing Instrument are important contributions to our efforts to fight those adverse effects. We look forward to the substantive discussions at the upcoming fifth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms, with a view to ensuring their full and effective implementation.

Maintaining effective export controls is without doubt essential in strengthening international security and curbing illicit proliferation activities. Turkey is party to all international export control regimes and wishes to see the universalization and effective implementation of those instruments. It is a known fact that the most practical means of combatting proliferation remains effective export controls implemented by the producer or the exporting countries.

Confidence-building measures (CBMs), on the other hand, make an important contribution to peace and security at global, regional and local levels, which are key to providing a better future for our populations. CBMs, by their voluntary nature, promote mutual understanding and cooperation, and therefore make an important contribution to the peaceful resolution of disputes and other principles of the United Nations Charter, including territorial integrity.

In that context, I would like to stress the importance of transparency. We value and support instruments such as the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures, and support the inclusion of small arms and light weapons as a mandatory category of the Register.

We were therefore heartened by the conclusion of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which has important provisions in that regard, along with others, including on export controls. The ATT is a momentous achievement and we look forward to its universalization and implementation in good faith.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to turn to our work here at the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The Commission was established as a deliberative body to support our efforts in other forums. Over the years, the Commission has successfully formulated consensus principles, guidelines and recommendations on a number of subjects.

Even though the deliberations during this substantive sessions of Disarmament Commission have been useful, if we are not able to agree on recommendations again this year, it will be the fifteenth year of work without concrete outcomes. It will mean that we have worked tirelessly for 45 weeks — in other words 10 months — without concretely justifying the body's relevance.

It is therefore paramount that we agree on recommendations this year. That can be achieved only by showing sufficienet flexibility and will, abandoning maximalist approaches and keeping in mind the body's deliberative nature, whereby its recommendations are not binding.

Mr. Al-Kuwari (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the 2014 substantive session. We also congratulate the members of the Bureau. We are fully confident that, with your experience, you will guide us to success in our work.

We endorse the statements by the representative of Oman on behalf of the Arab Group and the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/CN.10/PV.337).

This meeting is taking place following the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11), held on 26 September. We welcome the High-level Meeting, which we consider to be evidence of the international community's growing commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament. However, despite that note of optimism, we should not forget that the international disarmament regime in general terms, and nuclear disarmament in particular, experienced a setback in 2012 when the depositaries of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) showed themselves to be incapable of holding a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East.

The deliberations in the Disarmament Commission have not led to progress since 1999. No tangible progress has been made in the area of nuclear disarmament since the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which took place in 1978. That raises many questions concerning the justification for the annual meetings if we do not have a minimum threshhold of objectives to be achieved following each session. We also draw attention to the fact that the goal of the meetings of the Commission is not to merely meet, but rather to achieve results and agree on tangible recommendations on how to take a qualitative step forward in the area of non-proliferation through consensus, which would make it possible to arrive at a treaty for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

I would therefore like to express Qatar's concerns about the inertia within the Disarmament Commission since 1996 owing to the lack of political will, even for the purpose of establishing a programme of work for the Conference.

Among the results of the 2010 NPT Review Conference we note the adoption of a resolution setting out a road map for the implementation of the resolution on the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. At that time, the resolution was a condition for the signing of the Treaty. Among the stages that were defined

at the time, the Secretary-General was entrusted as depositary of the NPT, and the countries of the region with defining a host country, a coordinator and a date for the holding of the conference. Nevertheless and despite the efforts made by the Arab countries, as well as by other international parties for the holding of that conference on the date scheduled, the conference was not held owing to the refusal of a single State to ensure the holding of the conference for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In that regard, we would like to reaffirm that establishing such a zone in the Middle East is inconceivable unless Israel adheres to the NPT. We therefore affirm the Arab Group's position with regard to the need for Israel to accede to the NPT and to submit its nuclear arsenals to comprehensive safeguards agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

If nuclear-weapon-States were serious about strengthening the disarmament system, the ways to achieve that are perfectly clear, namely, by taking tangible and serious steps towards nuclear disarmament and by prohibiting nuclear tests. Nuclear-weapon States that are still not signatories to the NPT have been called upon to adhere to the Treaty, and those that have yet to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should do so. The Treaty has still not been implemented because eight States have still failed to ratify it.

The State of Qatar attaches great importance to strengthening the NPT and to bolstering the pillars on which the NPT is based, namely, disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Within that framework, we should like to reaffirm our satisfaction about the Egypt's initiative at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly to take practical steps to strengthen international and regional efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Furthermore, we welcome the letters sent to the Secretary-General by Arab States and Iran supporting Egypt's initiative (see A/68/781). We reaffirm the position of the Arab Group with regard to the holding of a conference in 2012 to establish a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East as soon as possible and to set a new date for the holding of that conference. We would like to draw attention to the fact that the delays in setting the date fo; the conference have led to suspicions about nuclear-weapon State's good faith in establishing such a zone in the Middle East. That will have a negative impact on the NPT regime and on non-proliferation in general.

Ms. Street (Australia): Mr. Chair, may I congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) for the year 2014. Australia is pleased to see you chairing the Commission, Sir, and you can be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

As you said yesterday, Mr. Chair, we have important work ahead of us. The UNDC is at a critical juncture, having failed to reach an agreed outcome for 15 years. Its credibility and relevance are at stake. While high levels of ambition are always important, sometimes we must also be realistic and content with incremental progress. In that regard, we agree with the view expressed by the representatives of some other delegations that, for the UNDC this year, modest consensus recommendations are preferable to no outcome at all.

Australia continues to give top priority to taking forward the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda. The past 12 months have seen increased international interest in this area. Australia has engaged actively in all key events on the calendar, including the General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Article XIV Meeting, the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons hosted by Mexico and, naturally, the recent Nuclear Security Summit. Australia has also participated in the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament and the Group of Governmental Experts to make recommendations on possible aspects of a long-overdue fissile material cut-off treaty, which is currently under way in Geneva.

In the current climate of heightened international interest in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Australia believes the UNDC can and should play a constructive role. This session of the UNDC comes just ahead of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Through our deliberations over the next three weeks, we can help foster the environment necessary for focused and productive discussions at that session on the implementation of the Treaty, which, for Australia, remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

The good health of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and a successful Review Conference in 2015 should be the

primary goal for the majority of us. The implementation of the 2010 action plan is essential for taking us further towards our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The recent conferences in Norway and Mexico that highlighted the devastating humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons demonstrated all too plainly why we must continue our work towards that goal.

We must find practical and realistic ways to achieve nuclear disarmament. We must do that together, acknowledging that progress on nuclear disarmament most readily occurs in an atmosphere of trust — an atmosphere conducive to transparency and to building the political will to turn away from nuclear weapons. The reality is that there is no short-cut to nuclear disarmament. We need to work hard and we need to work methodically, building block by building block, if we are going to begin to disarm the world.

Australia and fellow-members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) have been working in advance of the NPT Preparatory Committee session to propose practical steps that can contribute to greater nuclear transparency, further reductions in arsenals, de-alerting, the holding of a conference on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, article X withdrawal and greater security of nuclear weapons and material. The NPDI's positions on many of those issues will be finalized at the NDPI ministerial meeting in Hiroshima on 11 and 12 April, and we look forward to sharing them with delegations at the Preparatory Committee session later this month.

For Australia, the next logical step in the disarmament process is a fissile material cutoff treaty. We can never reach our shared objective of a world free of nuclear weapons — and we cannot maintain such a world — without having negotiated stringent controls relating to fissile material for weapons purposes. The Group of Governmental Experts presents the best opportunity since the negotiation of the Shannon Mandate for us to explore in a multilateral context the broad range of ingredients that would go into a Treaty. Importantly, the Group will also help take the 2010 Review Conference agenda forward and bring fresh impetus to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, which, like the UNDC, has fallen on hard times.

Another concrete step towards nuclear disarmament would be the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT is more than a practical commitment not to test nuclear weapons, it is symbolic of a broader undertaking to prevent their further development. Australia welcomes the declaration by some States yet to ratify the CTBT of a moratorium on their nuclear testing, but continues to call on all nuclear weapon possessors and other annex 2 countries that have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so.

Clearly, there are still gaps in the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Australia acknowledges the role of regional initiatives in providing a complementary focus, strengthening global efforts and addressing specific regional concerns and insecurities. Australia strongly supports the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and ongoing efforts to convene a conference at the earliest opportunity. We call upon all States in the Middle East to engage in a spirit of genuine and constructive cooperation to make that happen.

As noted by Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson yesterday (see A/CN.10/PV.337), 2013 was a successful year for the international disarmament community, and the UNDC should find a way to build on that success. Indeed, the past 12 months have been particularly productive in advancing global action on conventional weapons control, with, for example, the General Assembly's adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), of which Australia was one of the authors, by an overwhelming majority of States. The Security Council's adoption, on 26 September 2013, of resolution 2117 (2013) put forward by Australia to strengthen international action to combat the illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons was also a milestone in this area and built on the ATT, the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument.

Australia's commitment to the ATT remains as strong as ever. With entry into force just around the corner, our attention must now turn to the Treaty's effective implementation. For its part, Australia is continuing to provide support to those countries most affected by the uncontrolled spread of conventional arms, through the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation. Australia is pleased to be working alongside the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the other Facility donors to assist States to implement both the ATT and the Programme of Action. Australia calls on others to contribute generously to this promising new Facility.

The Australian delegation looks forward to the forthcoming UNDC discussions on confidence-building measures that will support the effective implementation of the ATT and the Programme of Action. We also hope that our discussions here will lay the groundwork for a successful fifth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action, to be held in June — a meeting that advances the agenda and moves us forward towards our ultimate goal of saving as many lives as possible.

Four days ago, on the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, the international community was reminded of the horrific impact on civilians of anti-personnel mines. Australia urges the continued harnessing of national and international assistance and cooperation and the full and effective implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Australia is pleased to have now become a State party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and encourages continued momentum on universalization of those two important instruments, which seek to reduce the horrendous damage caused by those deadly weapons.

As the Chair correctly noted yesterday, the UNDC has produced valuable outcomes in the past and it can do so again. Our discussions over the coming weeks will provide an opportunity for us all to engage substantively to help the UNDC break the impasse. We call on all delegations and individuals to demonstrate flexibility and creativity to achieve that goal and to set the UNDC back on its rightful path.

Mr. Koller-Lenhardt (Austria): Following the excellent stewardship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission during the past two years by the representatives of Peru and Malta, respectively, the Commission is now privileged to have you, Sir, chairing it during its last stage of the current triennial cycle.

After 15 years of extensive deliberations, it is time for the Disarmament Commission to fulfil its mandate set out in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2) by agreeing on recommendations to be submitted to the General Assembly. In view of current achievements and developments on disarmament issues in other forums, a substantive outcome in both Working Groups is not only desirable but realizable. The Commission should therefore focus on the consolidation of the common denominator emerging from our collective deliberations over the years, so that a substantive outcome can be agreed upon by consensus at the end of the current session.

Austria is in full alignment with the statement delivered previously by the observer of Greece on behalf of the European Union. However, let me add a couple of remarks in our national capacity.

Austria remains fully committed to substantive progress in all relevant disarmament forums, in the context, inter alia, of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and especially the General Assembly under Article 11 of the Charter. Over the past five years, Austria has been encouraged by the vast support for the resolutions aimed at taking the disarmament agenda forward, ranging from resolution 64/64, on the report of the Conference on Disarmament, resolutions 65/93 and 66/66, on the revitalization of the CD, and resolutions 67/56 and 68/46, on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

Last year, the Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament convened in Geneva and clearly demonstrated that perceived cleavages on nuclear disarmament issues, often stemming from the artificial dichotomy between the incremental and the comprehensive approaches, could be addressed in a productive way through transparent, credible and trustful dialogue and a focus on shared objectives. The consensus report of the Group, with its array of suggestions on how to advance the multilateral nuclear disarmament agenda, has been forwarded by the Secretary-General to the Commission and should serve as a source of inspiration for our deliberations in Working Group I. Likewise, the summary of the High-level Meeting held in New York pursuant to resolution 67/39 (see A/68/PV.11) is another important document accurately reflecting the clear priority of the overwhelming majority of the membership for achieving progress on nuclear disarmament, in particular with respect to the humanitarian imperative for nuclear disarmament.

Towards the end of this year in Vienna, Austria will host the third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. For us, nuclear disarmament is a global task and a collective responsibility, as expressly reflected in article VI of the NPT. Having facilitated the action plan on nuclear disarmament at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, Austria considers the full and swift compliance with article VI of the NPT to be of the utmost importance.

International nuclear disarmament efforts require an urgent paradigm shift, not least in the light of the danger of further nuclear-weapon proliferation, which can ultimately be prevented only in conjunction with credible and irreversible nuclear disarmament. In Austria's view, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is among the key drivers of proliferation and collective insecurity, whereas the focus on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons promotes the paramount concept of human security at large. The growing international awareness of the devastating humanitarian impact and consequences of nuclear weapons has a positive effect on international discussions and is resulting in greater understanding of the need to eliminate that risk.

Yesterday, Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson referred in his remarks to the "growing global consensus on the existential consequences of the possible use of nuclear weapons" (see A/CN.10/PV.337). There is indeed overwhelming support to firmly anchor the humanitarian imperative in our discussions about nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament. Austria looks forward to constructive participation in the discussions at the Vienna Conference that is commensurate with the urgency of achieving that shared objective.

While Austria fully acknowledges the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy as reflected in article IV of the NPT, an Austrian constitutional law prohibits not only nuclear weapons, but also facilities with the purpose of obtaining energy by nuclear fission. The Austrian Government's current work programme reaffirms the commitment to our anti-nuclear power station policy, taking into account the principle of free choice of energy mix. That paramount principle was reconfirmed in resolution 66/288, which endorsed the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, recognizing that the activities of countries in broader energy-related matters are of great importance and are prioritized according to their specific challenges, capacities and circumstances, including their energy mix. Against that backdrop, it is evident that any formulation that might be construed as promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy for power generation in a generalized manner would be inconsistent with the aforementioned outcome reached at the highest political level. Moreover, as my delegation repeatedly stressed during the current triennial cycle, any discussions on that topic are to be conducted in the relevant forums as set out by the General Assembly, most notably in its resolution 1145 (XII), pertaining to the relationship between the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons are highly important tools to ease tensions among States and promote international peace and security. Austria welcomes the progress achieved so far in Working Group II and looks forward to further constructive deliberations. From our perspective, due attention should also be paid to ongoing efforts aimed at curbing the use of explosive weapons in populated areas to protect civilian populations. In that context, let me re-emphasize the importance Austria attaches to the conventions prohibiting anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions.

Regulating the international trade in arms is not only important from a rule of law perspective, but also in terms of building confidence in that area. Austria therefore looks forward to the rapid entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty and envisages depositing its instrument of ratification before summer.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our conviction that our mandate can be fulfilled by focusing in both Working Groups on a consolidation of those elements that are conducive to consensus. In that regard, Austria particularly appreciates that the Chairs of both Working Groups issued consolidated drafts in the period between the sessions for further consideration by the membership.

Let me assure you, Mr. Chair, that Austria, which is also as one of the Vice-Chairs of the Commission, looks forward to constructively engaging with all delegations in order to reach a substantive outcome at the conclusion of this triennial cycle.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): Let me commend you, Mr. Chair, on your energy and patience in sitting through the deliberations all day. On behalf of my delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, and the entire Bureau on your election. My delegation also expresses its appreciation to the Chairs of the two Working Groups for their efforts during the 2013 session, as well as their pledge to continue their useful facilitation at the 2014 session. We also wish to thank Ambassador Christopher Grima of Malta for his leadership and contributions to advancing the work of the Disarmament Commission at the 2013 session.

Nigeria also aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement by the

Permanent Representative of Indonesia and with the statement delivered on behalf of the African Group (see A/CN.10/PV.337).

Nigeria underscores the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body of the United Nations that deals with the multilateral disarmament process. While noting its usefulness and recognizing its potential as the competent forum for discussing comprehensive nuclear disarmament, we wish to also state that the Commission needs to streamline and improve its working methods so as to achieve the desired objective for which it was established. The topmost priority of this body, we believe, is not only to address issues related to comprehensive nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also to ensure that its deliberations include issues related to the protection of non-nuclear States against the threat or use of nuclear weapons by States possessing such weapons.

Nigeria strongly believes that the continued existence of nuclear weapons on our planet remains an existential threat to all humankind. As such, their development, possession and deployment clearly vitiate all agreed international human rights and humanitarian principles and international law. Their maintenance and modernization are not only prohibitively expensive, but also deplete scarce resources that could otherwise be used for the betterment of the world and for advancing other peaceful, wholesome and edifying human endeavours.

Nuclear weapons are, by definition, weapons of mass destruction. Humankind has lived on the edge for too long. It has repeatedly been demonstrated that nuclear weapons are inhumane and unacceptable weapons that should be taken off the list of global armaments.

In that regard, we recall the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in 1996 (see A/51/218), which could not have been clearer, on the illegality of nuclear weapons and their harmful impact on human history. It is important that we strive to achieve the end goal of the global process of comprehensive nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and halt a spiral descent into unnecessary chaos occasioned by an accidental or deliberate detonation of nuclear weapons.

Nigeria acceded to the Treaty of Pelindaba to demonstrate its commitment to a nuclear-free world, and to help rid humankind of the sword of Damocles that has been hanging over its head for over six decades now. It is in that spirit that Nigeria calls upon other Member States to support efforts to replicate the measure in the remaining parts of the world, including in the Middle East, where nuclear-weapon-free zones have not been established.

Nigeria also reiterates the need for the full implementation of the action plan adopted by the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle-East. Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to the full implementation of the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT): nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation no doubt remain the ultimate goal, but we all need to significantly play constructive roles to ensure the remaining pillar, which is the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, is available to all States desirous of its use.

Taken together as one unit, the assurances and application of the three pillars of the NPT are measures that could actually save our world and benefit the whole of humankind. As we believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of those weapons, Nigeria will continue to support universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding security assurances to non-nuclear weapon States on the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them under all circumstances.

One aspect of our deliberations during this session will focus on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, while the other aspect addresses practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. While the role of the Disarmament Commission in developing those concepts is well noted, the Commission should take it a step further by translating concepts into reality.

Nigeria believes that it is imperative to highlight the measures taken in recent times to address the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons. My delegation commends the successful outcome of the second United Nations Conference to Review Progress

Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in September 2012.

A number of States in Africa are suffering from the illicit trade in that category of weapons, especially those on whose territories conflicts are taking place. We therefore call upon all States to support regional efforts aimed at addressing the menace of illicit small arms and light weapons, including the important component of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

My delegation strongly supports the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Nigeria signed and deposited its instrument of ratification on 12 August 2013, thereby becoming the third country to do so. We urge all States to ensure its entry into force and implementation. As the first legally binding global instrument to regulate the trade in conventional arms, the ATT could both prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms by preventing their diversion for unauthorized end use to unauthorized end-users and non-State actors. As a principle, its application by Member States could reduce human suffering, as well as contribute to international and regional peace, security, stability and development.

As you, Mr. Chair, continue to guide our deliberations at this session and as a confidence-building measure, we are hopeful that Working Group II, mandated to discuss portions of this historic landmark Treaty, will indeed highlight the need for continued elaboration of the usefulness of the ATT, even as we move towards its entry into force.

The question of anti-personnel land mines is one dear to my country and an area where the assistance of the United Nations Mine Action Service has remained important and commendable. We hope that fact will be accommodated in the final outcome of this session.

Nigeria wishes to highlight the efforts of United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in terms of their contributions to disarmament measures and other future challenges. My delegation notes the valuable input of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, particularly in the Centre's provision of capacity-building and technical assistance to many States in Africa.

Finally, Sir, be assured of the commitment of my delegation to constructively work towards fulfilling the mandate of the Disarmament Commission, as highlighted by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We hope Member States will demonstrate enough flexibility as we engage in deliberations in the coming days.

Mr. Pham Quang Hieu (Viet Nam): Let me begin by joining previous speakers in extending our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the 2014 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as well as to the other Bureau members and the Chairs of the Working Groups. My delegation is convinced that, under your able leadership, this year's session will arrive at a successful outcome.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Desra Percaya of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As we embark on our deliberations this year within the framework of the Disarmament Commission, the overall picture of disarmament affairs continues to provide us with solid ground for optimism for concrete results. Disarmament and arms control, although challenging, proved to be feasible with the adoption of General Assembly resolutions and the conclusion of a number of initiatives. The first-ever General Assembly High-level Meeting Devoted to Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11) and its follow-up resolution 68/32 are a testament to our commitment to this important issue. A number of Working Groups produced several deliverables, including with regard to taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations and negotiations on a fissile material treaty.

Greater effort will be required, however, to move us forward substantially on a number of core issues. Progress on issues such a convention on nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons remains elusive. Balance in the implementation of the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) continues to be addressed sufficiently. The multilateral disarmament machinery, especially the Conference on Disarmament, needs to be revitalized so as to fulfil its mandate. In that context, as we are at the end of the three-year cycle of the Disarmament Commission, a few key points, in our view, should be taken into account in our deliberations.

First, it is the collective and common responsibility of Member States to revitalize the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Together with and in complement to the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body, the Disarmament Commission serves as the central mechanism for disarmament success. The continued use of basic principles and practices, as consensually agreed at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and innovative ideas can and will provide a pertinent discourse conducive to further successes. In that sense, the Commission will indeed be of great use as the sole deliberative forum to which the international community has entrusted disarmament.

Secondly, our deliberations on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should bear in mind the need for balance among the three issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of energy, especially as to prepare for the last session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Those deliberations must also emphasize the ..eed to take into account concerns of parties to the NPT, including the crucial issue of convening as soon as possible a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It would be also useful to emphasize the importance of the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay, as well as the role nuclear-weapons States in that regard. That should also go hand-in-hand with further progress on negative security assurances and the eventual conclusion of a convention on nuclear disarmament, the necessity of which has been visibly demonstrated by recent conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

Thirdly, in our deliberations on conventional weapons, it is critical to highlight the legitimate right to self-defence of States, and thus the right to import, maintain and produce conventional arms for legitimate defence and security needs. Any new initiative on disarmament and arms control on conventional arms should not undermine this critical principle. Confidence-building measures in this field depend on the nurturing of an international environment in which all States are committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes and the principle of the non-use of force in international relations. Only in such an environment would confidence-building measures be of concrete effectiveness.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our strong support to you, Mr. Chair, and our firm commitment to working together towards the ultimate success of this important session.

The Chairperson: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who wishes to speamk in exercise of the right to reply.

Mr. Ibrahim (Syrian Arab Republic): I would like to refer to the unfounded allegations mentioned by the representative of the French regime this morning (see A/CN.10/PV.339). It seems that the hostile policy of his regime intends to falsify the reports of the investigation mission headed by Professor Åke Sellström, which did not attempt to identify the perpetrators of the heinous crime of using chemical weapons in Syria though the Syrian Government had asked the United Nations officially to mandate the mission to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria, starting with Khan Al-Assal near Aleppo, as well as to identify the perpetrators of that crime. In attempting to forge the findings of the mission's reports, the French representative is deliberately disregarding the many reports confirming that terrorist groups committed those horrible crimes. He is also being selective by choosing a single incident when the final report of the investigation mission mentions 16 incidents where chemical materials were used by terrorist groups against civilians and soldiers of the Syrian army. The French representative is also intentionally ignoring the progress in the process of eliminating the chemical weapons in Syria through the constructive cooperation between the Syrian Government and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations joint mission.

We would hope that the French regime and its delegation here in New York would seek to safeguard international peace and security as enshrined by the Charter of the United Nations and not to act as an agent of hostility, aggression and pro-terrorism, as their actions towards Syria show day after day.

The Chair: We have just completed the general exchange of views. The Chair wishes to thank all speakers for their words of support and good wishes. I took good note of all of the 45 statements. I am

encouraged by the readiness expressed to make this year's meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission a success. Of course, we will need a great deal of flexibility and creativity. But I have no doubt that we have the potential to do so.

One message that has dominated the debate is that we have not had a successful outcome for 15 years. We are all aware of thsy, so let us do our best in the coming days and weeks to make a difference.

Finally, I would like to remind all representatives that, in accordance with decision 45/492, the Chairs of the Working Groups are elected for three years. As we are all aware, the Chairs of both Working Groups, Ambassador Naif bin Bandar Al-Sudairy of Saudi Arabia and Mr. Knut Langeland of Norway, will continue to chair Working Group I and Working Group II, respectively.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Chairs every success in guiding the Working Groups to a productive outcome. I would also like to remind delegations that the meeting of Working Group I will begin tomorrow at 10 a.m. in this Conference Room. I thank everyone for their support and a good debate.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.